



Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

INSIDE

United States Recognizes Women of Courage

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — Eight exceptional women are being recognized by the U.S. secretary of state as "Women of Courage."

The award "pays tribute to outstanding women leaders worldwide" and "recognizes the courage and leadership shown as they struggle for social justice and human rights," according to a March 5 State Department announcement.

Selected from scores of nominees offered by U.S.

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First lady Michelle Obama, left, Mutabar Tadjibayeva-Uzbekistan, Veronika Marchenko-Russia, Wazhma Frogh-Afghanistan, Norma Cruz-Guatemala, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, Suaad Abbas Salman Allami-Iraq, Ambiga Sreenevasan-Malaysia, Hadizatou Mani-Niger pose for a photograph at the International Women of Courage Award Ceremony, March 11, 2009.

Kenya Accepts Seven Alleged Pirates from U.S. Navy for Trial

By Jacquelyn S. Porth
Staff Writer

Washington — Kenya assumed custody March 5 of seven alleged Somali pirates, captured earlier by the U.S. Navy, with plans to prosecute the suspects swiftly in the Mombasa court system.



Kenyan police unload the body of civilian merchant ship captain allegedly murdered by Somali pirates.

tem.

The Navy turned the suspects and evidence over to Kenya under the terms of a memorandum of understanding signed with the United States in January. The United Kingdom has a similar

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accord with Kenya — which has agreed to prosecute pirates in its courts — as part of a stepped-up effort to hold pirates accountable for their actions and deter future attacks in the Gulf of Aden and off the Somali coastline.

Vice Admiral William Gortney told a March 5 congressional hearing that the bilateral agreement took effect that very day, when Kenya accepted the alleged pirates. The Navy captured the men February 11, when a Marshall Islands-flagged vessel called for help as pirates equipped with AK-47s and rocket-propelled grenades attempted to board.

State Department official Stephen Mull told the House Armed Services Committee that the United States is grateful to Kenya for its role in bringing suspected pirates to justice. He also said U.S. officials hope to conclude bilateral agreements with other countries in the region to ensure that no single country bears the burden of prosecution. He named Tanzania as a possible candidate.

Piracy is an international crime that is prosecuted through a number of agreements, including the 2000 United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime.

Freedom of navigation and maritime

safety are Obama administration priorities. Pirate attacks have disrupted U.S.-supported World Food Programme deliveries, put international civilian crews at risk and jeopardized commercial shipping interests.

Mull articulated existing U.S. strategy to suppress pirate attacks as

secure and stable Somalia

Testifying in his capacity as the acting under secretary of state for international security, Mull said the United States led an effort for passage of United Nations Security Council resolutions 1846 and 1851 in December 2008. The two resolutions expanded the authority of international forces to conduct counterpiracy operations off the coast of Somalia and onshore.

The United States also hosted the first meeting of the Contact Group on Piracy — which comprises representatives from 34 countries and organizations — in New York in January. Mull said U.S. officials met again with representatives of the group on March 5 in Copenhagen, Denmark, to discuss how best to use national laws to prosecute pirates.

The group has established four working subgroups. They focus on the legal aspects of suppressing piracy, military coordination off Somalia, diplomatic outreach and best practices for outwitting pirates.

The United States heads the best practices group. The group met in London at the end of February to hear a report from the International Chamber of Shipping on deterring piracy.

Gortney said U.S. officials worked with the International Maritime Or-

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Kenyan police officers escort suspected pirates at the port in Mombassa, Kenya, Tuesday, March 10, 2009, after they were handed over by members of the German navy. The German navy handed over nine suspected Somali pirates to Kenyan authorities, and they will be taken to a court to face charges, officials said. (AP Photo)

follows:

Enhancing multilateral cooperation

Leading efforts to enhance existing international legal authorities

Collaborating closely with the international shipping industry

Coordinating U.S. and coalition military responses

Pursuing broader diplomatic and political approaches to the longer-term goal of reestablishing a more

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embassies around the world, women representing Afghanistan, Guatemala, Iraq, Malaysia, Niger, Russia, Uzbekistan and Yemen will be honored at the State Department in Washington on March 11.

The women are being recognized for their outstanding contributions on behalf of women and their societies, and for tackling such issues as domestic violence, forced child marriage, human trafficking and government corruption. These women are fighting for government transparency, access to justice and the rule of law and equal rights and opportunities for women.

The 2009 recipients of the Secretary of State's International Women of Courage Awards are Wazhma Frogh of Afghanistan, Norma Cruz of Guatemala, Suaad Allami of Iraq, Ambiga Sreenivasan of Malaysia, Hadizatou Mani of Niger, Veronika Marchenko of Russia, Mutabar Tajibayeva of Uzbekistan, and Reem Al Numery of Yemen.

The women will tell their stories at a public forum to be held March 9 at the State Department. Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton will present them with their awards March 11.

The International Women of Courage Award was instituted in 2007

by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice for women around the globe who have shown exceptional courage and leadership.

Clinton — who memorably declared in Beijing at the 1995 U.N. World Conference on Women that “human rights are women’s rights, and women’s rights are human rights” — is continuing the International Women of Courage awards in her new post as U.S. secretary of state.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

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ganization to produce a best practices pamphlet that advises flagged ships, among other things, to travel faster than 15 knots and not to travel at night.

The contact group will meet next in Egypt on March 16–17 to consider recommendations from the working groups and requests from new nations wishing to participate.

MULTILATERAL NAVAL EFFORTS THWART ATTACKS

The U.S. Navy established Combined Task Force 151 to work with other naval forces in the area off the Somali coast. The task force includes navies from European Union members. Since piracy on the

high seas is a universal crime, Gortney said, all navies are obligated to carry out anti-piracy operations.

U.S. military forces have been working with counterparts from Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey and the United Kingdom — sometimes operating as part of alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Shortly, Gortney said, additional forces are expected to join from Sweden, Belgium, Poland, Japan, Jordan, Singapore, Bahrain and South Korea.

As a consequence of cooperative efforts, the number of pirate attacks has dropped from an average of seven per month in the last quar-

ter of 2008 to only two a month in the first months of 2009.

But witnesses and members of Congress who considered the implications of piracy off of Africa agreed that there will not be a long-term solution to regional piracy until conflict in Somalia ceases. To that end, the United States supports the U.N.-led Djibouti Peace Process, a mechanism by which the Somalis can make political and security decisions with help from international donors as they address the need for political reconciliation.

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Sudan's Bashir Should Be Held Accountable, Says Clinton

By David McKeeby
Staff Writer

Washington — After an international court issued an arrest warrant for Sudan President Omar al-Bashir for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton called for calm and reiterated America's commitment to peace, justice and security for Africa's largest country.

"Governments and individuals who either conduct or condone atrocities of any kind, as we have seen year after year in Sudan, have to be held accountable," Clinton told reporters March 4. "We are going to hope that there is not any increased violence on the part of the government in Khartoum."

Earlier in the day, the International Criminal Court in The Hague indicted Bashir on two counts of war crimes and five counts of crimes against humanity for his government's alleged targeting of civilians during its 2003–2008 campaign against rebel groups in Sudan's western Darfur region.

"He is suspected of being criminally responsible ... for intentionally directing attacks against an important part of the civilian population of Darfur, Sudan," the international court said in a press release, "murdering, raping, torturing, and forcibly transferring large numbers

of civilians and pillaging their property."

At least 300,000 people have been killed in the conflict and 2.7 million others have been driven from their homes, according to the United Nations. American officials have joined many in the international community in calling Bashir's actions "genocide." International court officials did not include that charge,

humanitarian, development, peacekeeping and reconstruction assistance. It has actively supported a U.N.-African Union mediation initiative in Darfur, as well as efforts to implement the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended a 12-year civil war between northern and southern Sudan.

Sudan's government has rejected the international court's indictment, staging mass protests and ordering the expulsion of at least 10 major international humanitarian relief organizations currently serving 2.7 million displaced people in Darfur.

While it remains to be seen if Bashir — the first sitting president to be served a world court arrest warrant — will be delivered to The Hague, U.S. officials urge both the Sudanese government and rebel groups to exercise restraint. "No one should use the

[International Criminal Court's] decision as a pretext to incite or launch violence against civilians or international personnel," Rice said.

President Obama recently voiced his support for Darfur during a meeting with the actor George Clooney, who has been a vocal advocate for the people of Darfur and a peaceful negotiation of the humanitarian crisis in Sudan. A February 24 posting on the White House Web site following the meeting reported that "bringing relief to the battered region of Darfur is a top priority of the administration, the president

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People protest against Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir in front of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the Hague March 4, 2009. REUTERS/Jerry Lampen (NETHERLANDS)

but stressed that the indictment could be amended to include genocide based on the case presented by prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo.

"Those who committed atrocities in Sudan, including genocide, should be brought to justice," Susan Rice, America's ambassador to the United Nations, said in a written statement. "The people of Sudan have suffered too much for too long."

The United States is the leading international donor to Sudan, contributing more than \$5 billion in hu-

Obama Says Sanctions Against Zimbabwean Officials Will Continue

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — President Obama announced that United States sanctions against Zimbabwean leader Robert Mugabe and his key supporters will continue, citing an “unusual and extraordinary threat” to U.S. foreign policy.

Obama made the announcement March 4 in a written statement, informing Congress that economic sanctions originally declared in 2003 and expanded in 2005 and 2008 would continue in effect for one year beyond the previously set March 6 expiration date.

“The crisis constituted by the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe’s democratic processes or institutions has not been resolved,” Obama said. “These actions and policies pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States.”

However, the Obama administration has said it is continuing its humanitarian assistance to help the people of Zimbabwe as they continue to suffer from food shortages, a deadly cholera outbreak and continued economic stagnation. (See “United States Wants Evidence of True Power Sharing in Zimbabwe (<http://www.america.gov/st/democracy-english/2009/February/20090205154105esnamfuak0.4047968.html>).”)

The U.S. Agency for International Development has provided more than \$264 million in food and



The Obama administration says Robert Mugabe, shown celebrating his 85th birthday, is continuing to undermine Zimbabwe's democracy.

health assistance to Zimbabwe since October 2007. The agency has also pledged \$6.8 million in emergency water, sanitation, hygiene and health assistance since the cholera epidemic broke out in August 2008.

In a statement released March 4 by White House press secretary Robert Gibbs, Obama said Mugabe and others who have been identified as “persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Zimbabwe” will continue to have their access to any assets or property in the United States blocked.

Their actions “have contributed to the deliberate breakdown in the rule of law in Zimbabwe, to politically motivated violence and intimidation, and to political and economic insta-

bility in the southern African region,” Obama said.

The United States is joined by the European Union in maintaining sanctions against Mugabe and his key supporters, which include some members of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party and other individuals and entities closely tied to Mugabe’s regime.

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and vice president assured the actor and activist George Clooney last night.”

“The [International Criminal Court] issued an indictment based on a very long investigation, and it is now in a judicial system,” Clinton said. “If he believes that the indictment is wrongly charged, he can certainly contest it.”

Send a text message to Secretary Clinton (http://contact-us.state.gov/cgi-bin/state.cfg/php/enduser/question2_state.php) during her trip to the Middle East and Europe.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Obama Lifts Ban on Government-Funded Stem Cell Research

By Daniel Gorelick
Staff Writer

Washington — Promising vigorous support for scientists, President Obama signed an executive order lifting the ban on federal funding for human embryonic stem cell research. He also issued a memorandum to "restore scientific integrity in government decision making."

The order, issued March 9, directs the head of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to review and update guidelines for funding "responsible, scientifically worthy" human embryonic stem cell research within 120 days and revokes previous executive orders and instructions issued by President George W. Bush that prohibited federal funding for such research.

Flanked by prizewinning scientists, Obama pledged the U.S. government would develop and enforce strict guidelines for stem cell research. He also said that cloning for human reproduction, a technique possible with human embryonic stem cells but never achieved and illegal in many countries, will never be allowed in the United States. "It is dangerous, profoundly wrong, and has no place in our society, or any society," Obama said.

In lifting the ban on human embryonic stem cell research, the president has "legitimized and destigmatized an important area of science," Peter Agre, one of several prominent scientists who shared the

stage with Obama, told America.gov. Agre, who won the Nobel Prize in chemistry in 2003, is president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Obama said the promise of stem cells to cure disease should not be overstated. "Ultimately, I cannot guarantee that we will find the treatments and cures we seek. No

about protecting free and open inquiry," Obama said. "It is about ensuring that scientific data is never distorted or concealed to serve a political agenda — and that we make scientific decisions based on facts, not ideology."

According to the memorandum, "the public must be able to trust the science and scientific process informing public policy decisions."

The memorandum directs that selection of candidates for science and technology positions in government be based on the candidate's "knowledge, credentials, experience, and integrity." All scientific information used by the government should be reviewed according to "well-established scientific processes, including peer review when appropriate," and should be made public.

Obama also instructed each government agency to recommend ways to identify and address breaches in scientific integrity and adopt procedures, such as whistleblower protections, to ensure integrity.

The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy has 120 days to submit its recommendations to the president.

"President Obama also made clear today that his commitment to decisions based on science instead of ideology extends beyond stem cell

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US President Barack Obama signs an executive order on stem cell research. (AFP/Mandel Ngan)

president can promise that. But I can promise that we will seek them — actively, responsibly and with the urgency required to make up for lost ground."

SUPPORTING SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY

Honoring a promise made during his presidential campaign, Obama directed the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy to develop a strategy for restoring scientific integrity to government decision-making.

"Promoting science isn't just about providing resources — it's also

Neighborhood Watch Programs Help Build Citizen-Police Trust

By Jane Morse
Staff Writer

Washington — As a police patrol car drives slowly down a residential street, all seems calm and no suspicious activity is in evidence. But moments after the cruiser has left, thieves and other lawbreakers get back to work.

To catch these criminals, police officers need the many eyes and ears of the law-abiding residents living in the neighborhood, but all too often, citizens do not trust police and police do not have friendly relations with the people they are paid to protect. In the United States, a program called "Neighborhood Watch" is changing that.

The U.S. Neighborhood Watch Program was established in 1972 by the National Sheriffs' Association to unite law enforcement agencies, private organizations and individual citizens in a massive effort to reduce residential crime. Burglary, for example, accounts for nearly one-third of all serious crime reported in the United States, according to the association. This crime against property carries a high risk of injury or even death for the victim who comes into surprise contact with a burglar.

According to Christopher Tutko, director of the Neighborhood Watch Program for the association, some 20,000 local Neighborhood Watch programs are registered nationwide. He estimates that more than 50,000 informal programs are operating across the United States.



Kids with the Neighborhood Watch mascot in Santa Monica, CA



Neighborhood Watch programs, Tutko told America.gov, have proven effective. In the state of Virginia alone, Tutko said, where law enforcement agencies document every criminal incident whether or not arrests are made, statistics show neighborhoods with Neighborhood Watch programs have crime rates 40 percent lower than those neighborhoods without such a program.

"Law enforcement doesn't know your neighborhood unless they live in it," Tutko said. Only residents can recognize a car or person or activity that is out of place.

Moreover, there are not enough law enforcement officers to ensure the safety of everyone. According to Tutko, there are some 15,876 police departments in the United States; 80 percent of all local law enforcement agencies consist of 12 or fewer officers.

HOW NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH WORKS

In its simplest form, Neighborhood Watch is a way for citizens to meet

their neighbors, learn how to protect themselves and each other and work with the police to maintain a safe neighborhood.

Starting a Neighborhood Watch Program does not have to be a formal procedure, Tutko said. Rather, it is a matter of neighbors getting together to discuss problems in the neighborhood and calling in a police officer to discuss what can be done.

"The neighborhood develops their Neighborhood Watch program," Tutko said. "The police assist them — they don't run it." Officers, he said, are available to provide advice on security, such as the best methods to secure homes and automobiles, how to be alert to danger on the street, and how best to respond to a variety of threatening situations.

Residents are encouraged to meet regularly to share information about neighborhood problems with each other and with the police.

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Neighborhood Watch Programs Help Build Citizen-Police Trust . . .

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Police need citizen help to do their jobs successfully, Tutko said. Neighborhood Watch programs give police a relaxed venue in which to talk to citizens. Tutko, who formerly served as a police chief, observed: "If you didn't talk to people, you didn't get their help. You were isolated."

FOSTERING TRUST

Neighborhood Watch programs are a good way to improve communication and trust between citizens and police, according to Tutko. "It's a building process from both ends," he said.

"You've got a lot of officers who

ride around on patrol with their windows up and they're unknown to the person in the neighborhood. They're a uniform, and that's it," Tutko said.

But in the casual atmosphere of a Neighborhood Watch meeting, citizens can get to know the person wearing the uniform better. "You find out the guy behind the uniform speaks a language that you understand. He has a family; he has the same problems you have," Tutko said. These nonstressful encounters give citizens a chance to view the officer differently, he said. "They don't see him, like on TV, busting down a door or throwing somebody up against the car."

Neighborhood Watch meetings also offer different perspectives to po-

lice.

Too many times, Tutko said, police officers go into a neighborhood, make their arrests and then go home at the end of the day. But the citizens trying to cope with crime in their neighborhoods often feel trapped in an environment that is threatening and often dangerous.

"Once the police officer gets to know the citizen, he understands, or at least sees, what that person has to go through every day," Tutko said.

The National Sheriffs' Association has developed guidance for Neighborhood Watch programs on a Web site — USAOnWatch.org — aimed at citizens as well as law enforcement. ♦

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research — tasking every agency to ensure that sound science is at the heart of decisions we make," Energy Secretary Steven Chu said in a statement. "From energy to environmental protection to health care reform, Americans will be well served by this approach."

STEM CELL CONSENSUS

Scientists applauded Obama's executive order, saying that this could enhance collaboration between stem cell researchers in the United States and their international counterparts.

The new policy "sends a message internationally that [NIH-funded researchers] can collaborate with people," stem cell researcher John Gearhart told *Science* magazine.

During his administration (January 2001 – January 2009), President Bush allowed the NIH to fund human embryonic stem cell research on cell lines created before August 9, 2001, but prohibited research on cell lines created after that date. The executive order signed by President Obama lifts that restriction.

"By doing this, we will ensure America's continued global leadership in scientific discoveries and technological breakthroughs," Obama said. "That is essential not only for our economic prosperity, but for the progress of all humanity."

According to Obama, "the majority of Americans, from across the political spectrum and from all backgrounds and beliefs, have come to a consensus that we should pursue

this research; that the potential it offers is great, and with proper guidelines and strict oversight, the perils can be avoided."

The audience included Republicans and Democrats from Congress, as well as scientists who have made pioneering breakthroughs in stem cell research such as James Thomson from the University of Wisconsin and Shinya Yamanaka from Kyoto University in Japan.

Obama "wisely" reminded people of the limitations in stem cell research, Agre said, pointing out that federal funding for stem cell research provides an opportunity for discovery, but does not guarantee it.

"Now the hard work begins," Agre said, "and that's in the laboratories." ♦

Nigerian Woman Honored for Courageous Work to End Slavery

Washington — One of the winners of the U.S. secretary of state's 2009 International Women of Courage Awards was just 12 years old when she was sold as a slave.

"I was negotiated over like a goat," said Hadizatou Mani of the Republic of Niger. She was sold for \$500 in 1996.

Mani was a slave because her mother was a slave. Her status — and her future, and the future of her children — was attached to her caste. She was purchased by a man in his 60s who beat her, sent her to work long hours in the field, raped her and made her bear him three children.

Although Niger criminalized slavery in 2003, Mani's master first kept the news from her and later tried to convince village authorities that she was not a slave but one of his wives. When Mani finally won her "certificate of liberation" in 2005 and married a man of her choosing, her former master charged her with bigamy. She was sentenced to prison for six months.

Mani worked with the local nongovernmental organization (NGO) Timidria, and later with the British NGO Anti-Slavery International, to bring her case to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), charging that the government of Niger had not successfully protected her rights under its anti-slavery laws.

"It was very difficult to challenge my former master and to speak out when people see you as nothing more than a slave," Mani said in



U.S. first lady Michelle Obama (R) and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (L) greet Hadizatou Mani of Niger at an awards ceremony to announce this year's recipients of the Secretary of State's Award for International Women of Courage at the State Department March 11, 2009 in Washington, DC.

comments published by Anti-Slavery International. "But I knew that this was the only way to protect my child from suffering the same fate as myself. Nobody deserves to be enslaved. We are all equal and deserve to be treated the same. ... No woman should suffer the way I did."

Despite direct and indirect pressure to drop her suit, Mani pressed forward with her case. On October 27, 2008, ECOWAS condemned Mani's enslavement, held that the government of Niger had not protected her rights and ordered it to pay her a fine of 10 million CFA (Communauté Financière Africaine), or approximately \$19,800. The ECOWAS court decision is a strong message to the government of Niger and other countries in the region that anti-slavery laws must be more than words on paper.

Before this verdict, Nigerien NGOs such as Timidria had suggested that Niger's anti-slavery laws are a "charm offensive" and were "passed for Westerners." Mani's victory was not only for herself, but for the people still enslaved in Niger, offering them a bright ray of hope.

Mani was selected for the U.S. State Department's International Women of Courage Award, instituted in 2007 to honor exceptional courage and leadership in advocating for women's rights and advancement.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

World War II Black Women's Army Unit Receives Overdue Honors

By Crystal Ofori
Staff Writer

Washington — In early 1945, 855 African-American women, members of the U.S. Women's Army Corps (WAC), were sent to England and given the task of sorting through millions of undelivered cards, letters and packages destined for American troops serving in Europe.

The only unit of African Americans in the WAC to serve overseas during World War II, the all-black 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion worked first in Birmingham, England, and then in Rouen, France, handling the massive backlogs of mail piled from floor to ceiling in warehouses and airplane hangars. After their work was done, the women were discharged without any special recognition for what they had accomplished.

Now, almost 65 years later, three members of the 6888th — Mary Crawford Ragland, 81, Alyce Dixon, 101, and Gladys Carter, 87 — received a long-overdue thank you at a February 25 ceremony attended by military officials, soldiers, veterans, friends and family members. The event took place at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial, which is located on the grounds of Arlington National Cemetery near Washington.

These are "women of courage, women of fortitude, women of attitude and women of color," said one speaker. Another noted that women of color currently serving in the mili-

tary "stand on their shoulders."

Ragland and Dixon also were present a week later when U.S. first lady Michelle Obama visited the memorial March 3 for a Women's History Month event. "These women and thousands of others set a standard for excellence that enables women who serve today to take on even greater responsibili-

ties," Obama said, according to the White House. "These women and thousands of others set a standard for excellence that enables women who serve today to take on even greater responsibilities," Obama said, according to the White House. (See "End of U.S. Military Segregation Set Stage for Rights Movement" (<http://www.america.gov/st/diversity-english/2008/February/20080225120859liameruoy0.9820215.html>)).")

Freedom Team Salute is a program that recognizes veterans as well as the families, employers, Army civilians and others who support U.S. Army soldiers.

THE 6888TH: GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

Led by Major Charity Adams Earley, the first African-American woman officer in the Women's Army Corps, the 6888th worked around the clock in three shifts to sort through the backlog of mail. Their task was important because mail was a significant morale booster for the troops on the front lines of the war

— but it wasn't easy. The women had to deal with dim lighting, cold weather and poor heating, and as they pared down the piles of mail, more shipments were coming in.

There was also another problem with the mail: "A lot of them sent packages and some said 'Junior, U.S. Army' or 'Buster, U.S. Army,'" recalled Dixon, "but of course they had a [identification] tag number and we looked it up. But we couldn't look it up right away — we had to use the mail to find it" by digging for clues in letters and packages to

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Three members of the 6888th — Alyce Dixon, 101 (L), Mary Crawford Ragland, 81 (C) and Gladys Carter, 87 (R) — received a long-overdue honors at a February 25 ceremony attended by military officials, soldiers, veterans, friends and family members.

ties," Obama said, according to the White House.

During the February 25 ceremony, Colonel David Griffith, director of the U.S. Army Freedom Team Salute Commendation Program, which sponsored the event, noted that the 6888th consisted of women "who answered their nation's call to service at a time where the society they had sworn to defend and protect did not recognize their right to full citizenship." In 1945 segregation and racial discrimination still existed in many parts of the United States, voting rights for blacks

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help identify the soldiers. Another challenge was the mobility of the troops — soldiers often were on the way to another location by the time their mail caught up with them.

The 6888th finished their task at Birmingham by May 1945 and then moved on to Rouen to clear out another huge backlog of mail. They were given a six-month deadline but finished in half that time. The women wanted to prove their worth: "We wanted to prove that we were Americans citizens," Ragland said. "Our soldiers were going to war, we were their women, and we did it and we did it well."

At the ceremony, each woman received a personalized certificate of appreciation from Freedom Team Salute, a letter of appreciation signed by the Army chief of staff and the secretary of the Army, and a U.S. Army lapel pin and decal. The regional chairperson of the National Association of Black Military Women, Master Sergeant Shirley A. Smith, faced the three honorees and saluted them.

Ragland blew kisses as she received her certificate, Dixon smiled and giggled when her age was revealed, and Carter sang, did the army "Hooah!" shout and joked with the speakers, who referred to her as "energetic."

The honorees also thanked the people in attendance. Carter told the contemporary servicewomen, "Our pride is seeing you young women who are serving today and who have served since us." At the reception, she referred to them as her

"granddaughters," chatting and taking pictures with them.

Dixon said: "I thank God he let me live to be 101 [to be] at this ceremony. Thank you all!"

At the end, Ragland said: "When we returned to the United States after our duty abroad, we arrived and were sent home. No parade, no

loc.natlib.afc2001001.04741/transcript?ID=sr0001), a member of the 6888th.

The National Postal Museum offers a brief history of the 6888th (<http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/AfricanAmericans/p7.html>) Central Postal Directory Battalion on its Web site.



First lady Michelle Obama looks at a display at the Arlington National Cemetery's Women in Military

welcome, no nothing. But, thank you, Jesus, we've received it today!"

See also Black History Month (<http://amlife.america.gov/amlife/diversity/black-history-month.html>) and "Veterans' Wartime Memories Find Home in Library of Congress" (<http://www.america.gov/st/diversity-english/2008/June/20080625180223xlrennef0.4163629.html>), including a transcript of the experiences of Essie Woods (<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/vhp/story/>

For more information on the Women in Military Service for America Memorial (<http://www.womensmemorial.org/>) and Freedom Team Salute (<http://www.freedomteamsalute.org/>), see the organizations' Web sites.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>) ♦

Women Political Leaders Recap Their Diverse Routes to Success

By Ralph Dannheisser
Special Correspondent

Washington — Five women elected to federal and state office retraced their paths into politics for a National Archives audience March 5 and lamented that they remain relative exceptions in a male-dominated field.

The panel, which included two immigrants and two members of minority groups, recounted overcoming multiple stereotypes in the successful pursuit of political office.

Panelists included former Governor Madeleine Kunin of Vermont and former Lieutenant Governor Jenette Bradley of Ohio, as well as U.S. Representatives Grace Napolitano (Democrat, California), Marsha Blackburn (Republican, Tennessee) and Mazie Hirono (Democrat, Hawaii).



Grace Napolitano addresses the Democratic National Convention in Denver on August 25, 2008.

All agreed that they had followed less traditional paths into political office than their male counterparts, often starting with volunteer work at the local level.

Unlike men, several said, women usually must be urged to run by others. Mentoring by women like themselves, who have achieved elected office, can make a big difference.

Several suggested women who enter the political arena are motivated more by public service and less by considerations of power than are their male counterparts.

Kunin, elected to three terms as governor, recounted her entry into politics from a start as “a worried mother.” Concerned because her children had to cross railroad tracks when walking to school, she led a campaign to get flashing lights installed.

“I think a lot of women get started in politics because of a local or a family issue,” Kunin said. “I think you need to be angry about something, or worried. You have to have imagination to see something differently than it now is. And you have to be an optimist to believe that it’s worth it, that you’re not just banging your head against the wall in futility.”

Brought to the United States from Switzerland as a child, Kunin said growing up “with the American dream, being told by my single-parent mother that anything is possible here, gave me optimism about this country and about my possibili-



Former Vermont Governor Madeleine Kunin

ties.”

Hirono, born in Japan, also cites her mother as a key influence. “She changed my life by bringing me to this country and giving me the opportunity for an education. I turned to politics as a way to give back to my country,” she said.

Napolitano was a working mother of five when she was encouraged to run for her first office, a city council seat in Norwalk, California. Naysayers told

her that, as a Mexican American, a woman and a Democrat, “You have three strikes against you,” she said. She won by 28 votes.

Bradley said she needed urging to run for office. Although active in community work, she initially declined entreaties to run for the city council in Columbus, Ohio. But then, she said, she realized that “it was going to be a watershed moment ... an opportunity for the first African-American woman to be elected to the job.” A personal call from her congressman clinched her decision.

Blackburn recounted leading a successful battle against the imposition of a state income tax in her first elected office, as a Tennessee state senator. “Each and every one of you has the ability to exercise some form of leadership, and I would encourage you to,” she told her heavily female audience.

Eleanor Clift, panel moderator and a contributing editor at Newsweek magazine, told America.gov that

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RAISE Project Helps Women Scientists Win Recognition

By Jeffrey Thomas
Staff Writer

Washington — Ida Henrietta Hyde, who revolutionized neurophysiology by creating the microelectrode, had to contend with strict “no women” policies for post-graduate education at universities, but in 1896 still became the first American woman to graduate from Germany’s Heidelberg University.

Her dissertation adviser initially laughed at her desire to obtain a degree, and she was not allowed to attend lectures or laboratories, according to her memoir, which she titled *Before Women Were Human*. But she blazed a path German women soon would follow and helped show American universities the error of not admitting women to their graduate programs.

Since Gerty Cori in 1947 became the first American woman to win a Nobel Prize in science, American women have won scientific prizes and awards with increasing frequency. Women still do not win with the frequency one would expect given their increasing numbers in various science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields, but a new project initiated by some concerned professionals and supported by the Society for Women’s Health Research seeks to change that by providing help at a critical stage: the award nominating process.

The RAISE Project documents the glass ceiling that looms over women in the STEM fields and offers a searchable database on how to apply or to nominate someone for more than 1,000 different awards.



Biochemist Dr. Gerty Theresa Cori was the first American woman and the third worldwide to win the Nobel Prize.

The project got its start when a group of women involved in the sciences and related professions held their monthly networking get-together several years ago just as the year’s recipients of the National Medal for Science were announced with not a single woman’s name among them.

“Awards facilitate career advancement in academics and industry, provide personal validation of career choice, and enhance individual job satisfaction — all critical facets of recognizing the achievements of women,” said Dr. Stephanie Pincus, recalling that evening.

She said the group focused on a

single question: “What are we going to do about this?”

“So I said the way to fix this is to increase the nominations, because if you aren’t nominated, you can’t win,” said Pincus, who is a medical doctor and holds a master’s degree in business. But her initial notion of creating a clearinghouse that would match outstanding women with the available awards quickly proved administratively unworkable.

“So we transitioned to becoming an interactive Web site,” Pincus said. She collaborated on the project with Dr. Florence Heseltine, a scientist and obstetrician gynecologist at the National Institutes of Health. “Our goal with the Web site was to provide information. As we’ve developed the Web site, we’ve tried to

provide a lot more instruction, advice and counseling as to how to prepare an award — what factors can be helpful.”

The RAISE Project has documented that gender barriers persist in the STEM fields.

Women constitute almost one-third of the teaching and research faculty at four-year colleges and universities in the STEM fields, according to the most recent data from the National Science Foundation.

Only 17 percent of the awards given out since 1981 have been won by women, and almost one third of the women who

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Tech pioneer and Admiral Grace Murray Hopper won the first ever Computer Science “Man of the Year Award” in 1969.

Women Political Leaders Recap Their Diverse Routes to Success . . .

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the varied backgrounds of the panelists “show that there is no ... [single] direct path to elected office, and for women it’s very different than for men.”

“I think the difficulty of achieving elective office for women still exists, or our numbers wouldn’t be as small as they are,” Clift said. “I think we’re slowly gaining, but much too slowly for women of a certain age.”

WOMEN STILL A MINORITY AMONG U.S. ELECTED OFFICIALS

Carol Hardy-Fanta, director of the University of Massachusetts’ Center

for Women in Politics and Public Policy, introduced the discussion by noting that women, who make up more than half the U.S. population, hold only 17 percent of congressional seats, and only seven of the 50 state governorships. Unlike many other democratic countries, she said, the United States has not yet elected a female head of government.

She termed the session “an inspiration for women in the audience who are perhaps thinking of a political career themselves.”

Faced with a continuing gender gap in politics, Hirono said, women must do more to help elect other women. “It takes money to run for

office. ... It’s damn hard to raise money, but you have to do it. Women have to learn to open up their checkbooks and write out the same kind of checks that they write to buy shoes,” she said.

Blackburn stressed that techniques developed at the community level can be adapted to politics.

“Leadership is a transferable quality,” she said. “The leadership skills you develop in one arena you can use in another.”

And Kunin had another bit of advice for potential politicians in the audience: “Hold on to your idealism. People will tell you you’re naïve, or you’re too innocent. Those are good things.” ♦

AISE Project Helps Women Scientists Win Recognition . . .

(Continued from page 13)

received recognition won an award given only to women.

Of the more than 1,000 awards tracked by the RAISE Project, one-third never have been won by a woman. Others have had remarkably few female recipients.

No woman has won the Flexner Award for extraordinary contributions to the medical education community, for example, or the American Association for Cancer Research Award for Lifetime Achievement in Cancer Research, or the Fields Medal for outstanding mathematical achievement and potential.

Only 8.3 percent of the Lasker Awards — the most coveted awards in medical science — have been won by women.

“But I am very confident that things will get better,” Pincus said.

“One of the things we’re really working on is to try and bring transparency within award processes and organizations,” she said.

“We’ve shown that the composition of the award committee is very critical to the gender of the recipient.”

She cited research that has begun to probe how culture affects letters of recommendation and nomination.

“It isn’t just something men do to women; there’s a way women have of writing about what they do, writing about their projects, that is not as strong as what men say. It’s considered unfeminine to self-promote,” she said. “Those are some of the things we have to ad-

dress in both our awards processes and our academic promotions.”

“I’ve just been absolutely amazed how this has struck a chord of responsiveness in organizations. We’re working with the American Women in Science to put together more organizational change issues because it’s sort of something everybody knew but nobody had the data. We knew it intuitively, but we didn’t have any way for addressing it. What we’ve provided is a mechanism for people to say, ‘Oh yes — this is a problem and this is what we know we need to do to fix it.’”

More information about the RAISE Project (<http://www.raiseproject.org/>) and about how to nominate someone for an award is available on the project’s Web site. ♦

Former Child Soldier Uses Music as a Weapon Against Violence

By Crystal Ofori
Staff Writer

Washington — A former child soldier in the Sudanese civil war has turned rapper/activist, using his story, told in his music and in a documentary called *War Child*, to touch lives and promote peace and education in his homeland.

During a book-signing event in February at Howard University in Washington, curious students peppered Emmanuel Jal with questions about his life as a child soldier and were rewarded with an impromptu performance of his song “Emma” from his newest album.

At the age of 6, Jal was sent to Ethiopia for school but instead was trained as child soldier for the Sudan People’s Liberation Army. Many children, bitter and hoping to seek revenge, took part in the training to fight their Muslim/Arab counterparts in the North, who were viewed as the enemy.

Seven years later, he and other child soldiers left the camp and journeyed to Waat, Sudan, where he met his “angel,” British aid worker Emma McCune. Rescued, he left with her to start a new life, but that opportunity was cut short when McCune died in a car accident. In the wake of that tragedy, he found a new inspiration.

A decade later, after studying in Kenya and moving to Britain, Jal is singing songs that oppose violence, reject tribalism, promote peace and endorse education. Still a soldier at heart, Jal has a new war: fighting violence with music.

“Music is the only thing that can speak to your mind, your heart and

your soul system, your cells, and influence you without any hard work,” said Jal of his newest



Emmanuel Jal

weapon. “I put my fight into music, for two reasons: to cool down my anger, transforming that anger to positivity, and because I want to pass a message to people. At first I was doing it because it’s fun [and] it’s healthy; now it goes to the people.”

In 2005, he teamed with singer Abdel Gadir Salim for his *Ceasefire* album, which included a remake of his hit song “Gua.” This album was the first to team a young hip-hop Christian artist with a traditional Muslim Arab singer, two people who represented the opposing sides of the war. The album, sung in six different languages, combined old and new to urge a fresh beginning.

On the songs “Gua” and “Elengwen,” Jal pleads for togeth-

erness, for the cessation of violence and the growth of peace. He said he does not believe individual Sudanese are the source of the violence; rather, “What we have [rich oil deposits] is what’s killing us.”

PATIENCE AND HOPE

Jal’s journey has been a test of patience and a lesson of acceptance.

“Ceasefire was a chance to practice forgiving the Northern people as well as a chance to exercise working with Muslims,” Jal said. “Now I became more open with Muslims because I realized that the war in Sudan wasn’t about Muslims and Christians. Religion is what they used as a tool to oppress people.”

The album was a huge hit, especially in Sudan. The reason for his success? “It’s because I mentioned the truth,” Jal said. “The things that I’ve seen are what I was talking about,” he said, and people could relate to what he was saying.

He also promotes education, citing ignorance as another obstacle to peace.

“Education is very important. When you are educated, you’re being taught so many things that you can use to make choices and build your life.” With this in mind, Jal plans to fund construction of a school in his hometown of Leer in honor of Jal is currently on tour, promoting his CD, book and documentary — all entitled *War Child* — as well as raising funds for his school. He said he hopes this will help bring his message to mainstream America. ♦

Hip-Hop Star Emmanuel Jal Sends a Message of Hope

The speaker is Sudanese musician and former child soldier Emmanuel Jal. This podcast was produced by America.gov in March 2009.

(begin transcript)

[Music]

Emmanuel Jal: Nobody understands my pain. Nobody understands my struggle. People can only look at me and imagine what I've gone through and sympathize with me.

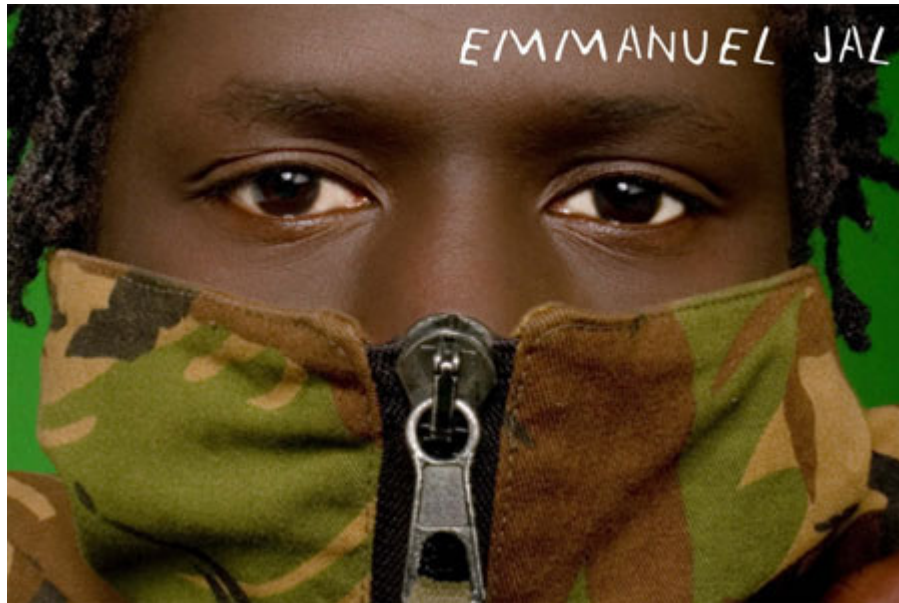
What I always tell people is: When you forgive, you have power, and that's when the healing begins.

[Singing]

You can never change the world with music. The one thing I want to offer is I want to give hope to people who are struggling down, that everything is possible and I want to make a difference. I want to at least inspire somebody to invest in somebody's life. Because I would say the best investment is to invest in human beings. Spiritually, give them faith where they can have hope. When things collapse on them, they have God to look up to. Physically, meaning give them something to eat now but show them how to get it so that they don't come and depend on you.

[Singing]

Music is the only thing that can speak to your mind, your heart, your soul system, your self, and



influence you without any hard work. I remember when the SPLA was fighting against the north, and during that time I still had my bitterness. I was hating on Muslims and Arabs. But I couldn't understand why they brought an Arab musician to come and entertain us. So why is it that we could accept their music but we don't accept them as a people? So there's something about music. So with music, to me, when I put my fight into the music, I do it for two things. One, that's where I cool down my anger and transform that energy into positivity. Two, it's because I want to pass a message to people. Because I get mad, frustrated every day. Like if I get angry with you, instead of me wanting to give you a punch, I cool down, take that energy level, convert it into music. That's what I do.

[Singing]

You need to understand and you need to be educated for you to make choices. Through education, learning about Martin Luther King, learning about Gandhi, learning about Nelson Mandela, I was able

to know, like, I'm not the only person going through issues. And I was able to use their stories and admire them, and say, 'Wow, if I let go, then I may be more like them and influence many people.' And so, it's a choice that I have to make.

You see, you can only get something when you see or hear. So when you hear their voices, you can hear the pain in their voices. So you have to listen why.

[Music]

What I have is a message of hope, and I'm preaching a message of peace using my experiences and using the existing problems happening in my country. So I'm a spokesperson not only for Sudan but for Africa at large, you know. Because I have experienced almost every incident of what people are talking about: starvation, war and poverty.

It took a simple British aid worker to invest in me and here I am today. So my call is: Invest in somebody. I can never change my past. I've lost my childhood. Every day I am in pain, you know, about my past. But I can only use that experience to affect my future.

[Music]

(end transcript) ♦

U.S.-Supported Foreign Broadcasting Adapts to Digital Age

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Staff Writer

Washington — The U.S. government's premier international radio and television broadcast organization — the Voice of America (VOA) — will continue to provide timely news and information to more than 130 million people worldwide while pursuing innovative ways to engage this audience, says VOA Director Dan Austin.

"Everything I have seen or heard from the new [Obama] administration and from people [in Congress] is that there is an understanding that what we do, dollar for dollar, is one of the better investments the American taxpayer can make," Austin told *America.gov* March 4.

The former Wall Street Journal reporter and executive, who now oversees VOA's \$190 million budget, said, "Our fundamental mission has basically remained the same" since VOA began broadcasting in 1942 during World War II.

"Our task is still to provide accurate, balanced and comprehensive news and information programs for foreign audiences. We are just expanding our technical ability to do that while at the same time using state-of-the-art information technology to have a dialogue with people."

Increasingly, VOA is using the Internet to interact with its audience. In addition to transmitting news and information, it operates social net-



VOA'S current master control room.

working programs on its Web site and uses blogs and webchats to encourage audience participation, Austin said.

It also uses the Internet for English language learning programs. In 2008, VOA awarded a contract to Alelo Inc. to develop an interactive Web-based learning portal to teach English as a second language. The portal is extremely popular with college-age students in China and Iran.

VOA now broadcasts 1,500 hours of radio and television news and feature programs each week for a

foreign audience of 134 million people. Its 1,100 journalists and technicians broadcast in 45 languages (25 through its television arm), using a growing network of 1,200 local radio and television stations, as well as cable systems.

"Our strategy for reaching audiences is market- and research-driven," Austin explained. "People in Nigeria get most of their news via shortwave radio, so we're there in that market with radio. Many people in Iran get their news through satellite TV, and we're there in TV. If mobile devices [cell phones] are what young people in key markets are using, we're going to be there" broadcasting to them in that format too.

AFRICA'S LEAPFROG APPROACH TO TECNOLOGY

Austin said Africa is where information technology is literally "leapfrogging."

"Where they didn't have a hard-wired infrastructure,

some countries have gone from shortwave broadcast to text messaging, SMS [short message service], to mobile devices," he said. In Zimbabwe, for example, "we have used SMS with some success, although we still broadcast there from [shortwave] and medium-wave transmitters in Botswana."

"We are investing a fair amount of money into our technological infrastructure," Austin said. "Right now, we have one foot in the analog world and one foot in the digital world."

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Those Most Affected by Climate Change Seen as Unaware of Dangers

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The issue of climate change has gained prominence in the Western press, but in many developing countries the topic rarely appears in headlines, and citizens remain relatively uninformed about the risks they face from environmental degradation.

"Climate change is one of the most pressing problems for reporters to cover in the developing world and is something that is being largely neglected," said Oren Murphy, regional manager for Southeast Asia at the nonprofit Internews Network.

"There is a huge ... information gap we found between people who are most likely to suffer from the impact of climate change and their access to information."

Murphy and journalists spoke in Washington on March 4 at an event hosted by the Center for International Media Assistance, an initiative by the nonprofit National Endowment for Democracy.

For many developing countries, improving their economic well-being through fast development is an overriding imperative, but Murphy said climate change and environmental damage can cause a country's years of economic growth to be undone — by rising waters, decreasing drinking water supplies, crippled fishing industries and other environmental disasters.

Environmental journalists are needed to challenge governments on their development plans, particu-



Poor news coverage in the developing world leaves many unaware of the consequences of environmentally unsustainable economic growth.

larly when short-term financial interests are allowed to outweigh the longer-term costs, he said.

But the environmental problems and the looming threats from climate change are relatively untouched topics for many journalists due to factors such as the challenge of acquiring a background in scientific matters and the widespread view that the environment is not considered a prestigious beat for reporters as compared to politics or business.

"We've found that environment reporting is still sort of considered a purview of the 'tree huggers' and is not really viewed as something that is going to have a major impact across the country, both on economics, on politics and then also on social development," he said.

There is also a widespread misconception that environmental protection and economic development

"are mutually exclusive."

Rob Taylor, a director at the International Center for Journalists, said when he speaks with Indian political and business leaders about their country's increasing carbon dioxide emissions, he always is reminded that Indians do not care to discuss the issue because the per capita carbon dioxide emissions from the United States are 20 to 25 times greater than those from India.

But "India and China are growing so fast that what they are doing alone, if their growth path continues, will be enough to cause climate change in a serious way without any contribution from the U.S. and Europe," Taylor said.

He added that many reporters and editors are being pressured by their governments not to report on environmentally hazardous business practices in order to protect economic development.

Steve Paterno, a freelance journalist from Sudan who was in the audience, said in some countries the issue of climate change is interconnected to business and corruption. "I don't understand how you can separate it, especially in countries that are very undemocratic," he said.

HIGHLIGHTING THE LONG-TERM COSTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Among its ongoing projects, Internews is reaching out to journalists in China and central and south Asia to show how shrinking glacial ice in the Himalayas will significantly decrease the water supply to important rivers such as the Mekong, Yangtze and Ganges with

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Telling America's story

Those Most Affected by Climate Change Seen . . .

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"catastrophic effects for the whole region."

Murphy said that until very recently in China "there has been almost no discussion of this in the national media around the region and the affected areas."

But he added the Chinese are "beginning to see the actual true economic cost of ignoring the environment for the past decade as they have gone through growth," and Chinese officials have become much more interested in environmental sustainability "so that they don't have runaway costs in the form of health care and pollution and cleaning up all those messes."

Jon Sawyer, executive director of the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, said one of the challenges for

journalists covering climate change and other crisis issues is walking the fine line between objectively reporting the situation and directing those who are inspired to take action.

"How do you incorporate into that platform opportunities or information of where you can go if you want to take action or just have discussion about what are the forms of action you can take without our passing judgment on it?" he asked.

Sawyer recommended journalists try to frame their stories to engage and educate their audiences and to encourage "more opportunity for back and forth in the discussion."

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov/>) ♦

Supported Foreign Broadcasting Adapts to Digital Age . . .

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"But, bit by bit, we're putting together a [digital] system," he said, that eliminates tapes and similar recording and playing equipment, relying instead on computerization to get better quality quickly and cost-effectively.

CRACKING THE "TOUGH NUT" OF BURMA

Austin said a good example of melding technology with traditional reporting was VOA's coverage of a devastating cyclone that struck Burma in May 2008, killing more than 75,000 people. Because the Burmese government played down the effects of the storm, Austin said, "to get the true story of the devastation out, we brought people into neighboring Thailand, trained them in how to use satel-

lite video cameras, and then sent them back into Burma to get footage."

In February, VOA launched its first satellite TV program for Burma, an important development because the country's ruling junta severely restricts the flow of information, Austin said. "Burma is a very tough nut to crack, and this program will expose people in Burma to information and images they may never have seen before."

The television show, airing Sunday mornings and repeated during the week, is an expansion of VOA's Burmese Service radio programming, which now broadcasts 3.5 hours daily on shortwave, according to VOA's Web site.

In October 2008, VOA signed an agreement with MGM [TV] Net-

works Latin America to carry Spanish-language news and cultural affairs programming on MGM's popular movie channel. The network reaches 20 million households throughout the region on satellite and cable.

"This agreement will supplement VOA's wide network of radio and TV affiliates in the region, and ensure the audience is up to date on the latest news and information from the Americas and the world," Austin said at the signing ceremony.

VOA's reach has become so broad, Austin said, that "Google News now rates us as the Number 5 news source worldwide. This comes at a time when a lot of television networks and print people have really cut back on international coverage." ♦